

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED
SOCIETIES, *et al.*,

Plaintiffs,
v.

MICHAEL MCDONALD, in his official
capacity as Acting Chairman of the National
Endowment for the Humanities, *et al.*,

Defendants.

Case No. 1:25-cv-03657

DECLARATION OF Jason Rhody


I, Jason Rhody declare as follows:

1. I, Jason Rhody, am Senior Director of Engagement Strategy at the Modern Language Association (MLA).
2. I am both a member and an employee of the Modern Language Association.
3. I intended to apply for a Development Grant in the Spotlight on Humanities in Higher Education program offered by the Division of Education Programs at NEH.
4. In 2023, MLA (PIs: Rhody and Utell) received a development grant (ASB-292330-23) through the Spotlight on Humanities in Higher Education program offered by the Division of Education Programs at NEH. This two-year award was focused on “Reimagining Humanities Coursework for Career Readiness: A Virtual Workshop for Teachers of Languages and Literature.” Through this \$60,000 award over two years, we created a virtual professional development workshop series to help prepare humanities instructors at small and mid-sized institutions so they could align their humanities courses with career-minded outcomes. We offered a very successful workshop series and were in the process of working with the faculty participants when our grant was terminated.

5. Prior to that termination, we had applied for a follow-up grant in the same category in order to continue the work, responding to tremendous demand (we received 100 applications for 18 available participant spots in the first round). That second grant (ASB-306454), “Extending Humanities Coursework for Career Readiness: An MLA Virtual Workshop for Teachers of Languages and Literature at Small and Mid-Sized Institutions” was submitted by the deadline of 1 October 2024. The second grant was under review at the time that our first grant (ASB-292330-23) was terminated by NEH. NEH staff continued to review the new application, and we received a rejection letter on 5 May 2025.
6. Per NEH’s policy, we requested a copy of the peer reviewer evaluations of our proposal, which we received on 28 May 2025. In addition to very positive feedback, our second proposal received the highest rankings possible (all “Excellent” with one review marked as a recusal). Any seasoned grant writer is well aware that proposals may not succeed for any number of reasons. The usual practice when receiving a rejection is to prepare a revised resubmission. Our intent was to apply at the next available deadline until the grant program was closed. We estimate a minimum of 80 person hours went into the preparation of the proposal (including the bulk of two full-time employee hours over a two week time period, plus finance and administrative assistance, and not including efforts from collaborators in preparing supporting letters of commitment).

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on June 6, 2025 in New York City, NY.



Jason Rhody